

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Mary LaPorte and I am from Hartford, CT. I am here as a volunteer with The Hartford Deportation Defense Fund and GHIAA. I stand in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status.

For the past four years I have volunteered to accompany undocumented immigrants to deportation hearings and check-in procedures at the Federal Courthouse here in Hartford. Of course, this was suspended during Covid). In that time I have met many families with children. Being a parent is extremely challenging in the best of scenarios. To be an undocumented immigrant trying to survive in the shadows includes finding ways to keep yourself and your family healthy. Children get sick. Parents get sick! The whole family gets sick! I've watched as parents cuddle small children while waiting hours to have their cases heard in the court. Not infrequently everyone in the family is obviously sick. I always bring Kleenex and wipes with me.

I hear their stories. Their journeys to CT have been harrowing. The choices they face are heartbreaking—**Do I feed the kids? Do I go to a doctor or emergency room when I am ill and we have no money. My job – if I have one - may be at risk if I take any time off. If it is something serious – like cancer or managing diabetes or heart disease, what can I do? I am in my early twenties and I am struggling with addiction and mental health issues. I am old and alone. Am I in danger if I come out of the shadows for treatment? Will I be deported? I AM OFTEN FRIGHTENED!**

Health care is essential and a human right and moral obligation on the part of those of us who are more secure. We are not a third world struggling nation or a state facing deep fiscal crises. The State of CT has the ability to meet this obligation. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage. Now is the time to finish this task and provide this necessary support to **all** undocumented immigrants.

Sincerely,  
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